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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001412

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR KS

SUBJECT: NATIONAL SECURITY SECRETARY PARK SEES LITTLE
PROBLEM WITH CAMP RETURNS AND SMA ISSUE

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun

¶1. (C) Dr. Park Sun-won, Secretary to the President for National Security Strategy, offered a rather trouble-free assessment of the USFK camp return and relocation funding issues when he met with the A/DCM on May 10 at the Blue House. Dr. Park said he had met with ROK Minister of National Defense (MND) Kim Jang-soo the prior Monday afternoon to discuss both issues. He told the A/DCM the Defense Minister would be testifying before the National Assembly Committee on Environmental and Labor Affairs sometime in June, and that he would have to take questions about the environmental condition of the various camps USFK was attempting to return to the ROK. Park said Minister Kim was fully prepared to absorb "all the blame and the criticism" that was likely to be thrown at him and that he would "take all the political risk." In addition to making it clear that MND Kim was doing his best to support USFK and the Alliance as a whole, Park indicated he thought Kim would be able to survive the onslaught and deliver on his promise to Secretary Gates to return all the remaining camps by the agreed upon deadline of June 1st.

¶2. (C) Turning to recent criticism over USFK's plans to use Special Measures Agreement (SMA) funds to pay for part of the relocation and consolidation of U.S. Forces Korea, Park said that Defense Minister Kim had been very helpful to the Alliance there as well, explaining to the National Assembly back in February that agreements and understandings between the U.S. and South Korean governments did allow for SMA funds to be used for that purpose (see Para 3.1.b). He said DM Kim's remarks to the National Assembly had been "very important" in enhancing that understanding at the National Assembly. He cautioned, however, that neither MND, nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), were likely to issue a public statement to that effect anytime soon because of the political sensitivities surrounding the use of ROK taxpayers money to fund the construction of new U.S. military facilities.

¶3. (U) BEGIN TEXT

MND Press Release on February 2, 2007:

¶1. SMA is a shared cost that ROKG pays in order to assure a stable environment for the USFK.

1.a. According to the SMA, the burden-sharing is composed of wages for Korean employees, military construction,

reinforcement of combined defense force, and military equipment support.

1.b. Of these, construction-related cost is set aside for construction projects needed for the stationing and maintenance of USFK. As long as the construction costs are not used to build entertainment facilities, it could be used for facility construction, including the base relocation project.

¶2. We share the need for improving the way the SMA negotiations are conducted and the budget is executed. As such, we will consult this year to seek a new formula aimed at a more reasonable burden-sharing.

END TEXT
VERSHBOW